UNITED
NATIONS

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Secretariat

ST/IC/1997/43
15 July 1997

INFORMATION CIRCULAR*

To: Members of the staff

From: The Secretary-General

Subject: NEW SYSTEM FOR THE PROMULGATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUANCES

1. By Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/1 of 28 May 1997, I introduced a new system for the promulgation of administrative issuances. In this context I have also issued a separate bulletin on information circulars (ST/SGB/1997/2, of the same date).

2. A scrutiny of the current indexes of these issuances (ST/AI/218/Rev.18 and Add.1) shows that many issuances that appear in the indexes are obsolete. At the same time it is obvious that the Organization is in need of deregulation. I have therefore decided to reform the system, and the first steps were taken through the two Secretary-General's bulletins mentioned above.

3. The reform will now continue. The promulgation of administrative issuances is the responsibility of the Department of Administration and Management, which will review all administrative issuances for substantive provisions. However, in order to introduce the new system as quickly as possible - bulletins concerning the organization of the Secretariat are, e.g., directly linked to my reform programme for the United Nations - I have asked the Office of Legal Affairs to take the initiative with respect to technical aspects in the first phase of the reform.

4. In this initial phase a review will be conducted of those bulletins governing the organization of the Secretariat, which were previously referred to as "the Organization Manual". Henceforth the organization bulletins will actually "govern" the Organization and will not, as in the past, be issued

* Expiration date of the present information circular: 30 June 1998.

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ex post facto. The Office of Legal Affairs will now assist all major organizational units in drawing up new bulletins that conform to modern legislative drafting techniques and concisely set out the core functions of each department/office. The drafts will then be sent to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management for review of the substantive provisions, which must also be checked for overlaps and/or gaps between departments/offices. Finally, the drafts will be submitted to me for approval.

5. The main features of the reform are as follows:

- Reduction of the number of administrative issuances by immediate abolition of obsolete issuances;

- A clear separation of rules (i.e., directives or imperatives which must be followed within the Organization) and material such as information circulars and other documents that are for information purposes only and which must not establish directives or imperatives (i.e., be a source of law);

- Commencement of a total revision of the unwieldy mass of administrative issuances that apply today. As the need arises for amendments to existing administrative issuances the opportunity will be taken to revise them and issue them in the new succinct format. The others will be reviewed over time with the ultimate goal of a complete reform of all administrative issuances;

- All financial and personnel directives will be abolished and any necessary rules contained therein will be incorporated into administrative instructions. A sunset clause will terminate all financial and personnel directives by 31 December 1999;

- Only Secretary-General's bulletins and administrative instructions will henceforth be used for promulgation of rules that apply generally within the Organization. These documents will be edited in a modern style with clear titles so as to guide the reader immediately to the particular rule being sought;

- In order to facilitate the use of administrative issuances that have been amended, consolidated versions of amended bulletins and instructions issued under the new system will be available in electronic form;

- A new index will be made that combines the present numerical and subject indexes;

- With respect to information circulars, they may be used and issued as in the past. However, they have to be cleared to ascertain that they do not establish rules. They must also contain a date of expiry.

6. With respect to information circulars, it should be noted in particular that they must not be used as legislative documents, but solely for information purposes. The introduction of a date of expiry is an idea which was contemplated many years ago but never effectuated. It will assist staff in

finding relevant information. It will also make it easier for those who administer the system to remove from the indexes circulars that are no longer of interest.

7. It is expected that this reform, which is similar to what has been carried out at the national level in some Member States, and which will be introduced progressively over the next few months, will contribute considerably to clarity and transparency within the Secretariat. For the staff at large, it is of paramount importance that all the rules of the Organization are succinct, accessible and made available in a consolidated way. That ambitious but vital goal is to be introduced step by step as the need arises until all administrative issuances have been reviewed.